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LETTER DATED 17 MAY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SUDAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

1. Please find enclosed herewith an editorial that appeared in the Boston Globe on 13 May 1999 entitled "The ugly truth about the attack in Sudan".

2. The paper stated that, on the morning of 21 August 1998, the Al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory was demolished by American cruise missiles. Later that day, President Clinton justified the attack by saying that Al-Shifa was, in fact, a chemical weapons factory linked to Osama bin Laden, and so it was that, on the night of 21 August 1998, Saleh Idris (the owner of the factory), a member in good standing in the international business community, was branded as an international terrorist. The paper also added that "the campaign to defame his good name continues to this day, orchestrated from the offices of President Clinton's National Security Council. It is a despicable campaign, made more so by the fact that every one involved knows that the charges against Idris are false".

3. The paper indicated that, in an interview with ABC News, Mr. Idris explained that he had bought Al-Shifa because of a desire to give something back to the country of his birth. At the time it was destroyed, Al-Shifa supplied more than half of all the medicines consumed in the Sudan, a desperately poor country in need of medicine. The paper went on to mention that, incredibly enough, the Clinton Administration knew none of these facts when it ordered the cruise missile attack. It did not even know that Mr. Idris was the owner of the Al-Shifa factory.

4. The paper also stated that, unencumbered by facts, members of the President's national security team explained the attack as follows:

(a) Al-Shifa was an adjunct to the Sudanese military industrial complex; it was closed to the public, fenced off and heavily guarded by Sudanese military personnel;

(b) A soil sample taken from the plant's premises proved that anthrax was being produced there.

5. The paper clarified that the international press corps quickly made hash of all but the last of these assertions. Al-Shifa was not part of the Sudanese military industrial complex. It was open to the public. There was no fence, and no guards patrolled its grounds "other than the night watchman who was killed in the attack".

6. The paper stated that, being a man of considerable means, the owner hired the law firm of Mr. Akin Gump, "where his good friend and former Democratic National Committee Chairman, Mr. Robert Strauss was a partner", to refute the United States Government's charges. Akin Gump, in turn, hired the private investigative firm of Kroll and Associates to do a complete background check on Mr. Idris. Akin Gump also hired Tom Tullius, chairman of the chemistry department at Boston University, to do a scientific inquiry into whether or not Al-Shifa might have been manufacturing anthrax.

7. The paper went on to say that the investigation by Kroll and Associates exonerated Mr. Idris of any ties, real or imagined to bin Laden. The scientific inquiry concluded that Al-Shifa was not a chemical weapons manufacturing facility and that the United States Government's soil sample was almost certainly a false positive. The net result of these investigations proved to all but senior Clinton Administration officials that bad intelligence and bad science had led to a terribly mistaken bombing mission. On 3 May 1999, the United States Department of the Treasury tacitly admitted as much by unfreezing Mr. Idris's financial assets. The Treasury did so under orders from the Department of Justice, which did so on instructions from the White House.

8. The paper concluded the editorial by saying that it would be better if the United States Government simply confessed its error, apologized to Mr. Idris for its disgraceful conduct, and immediately compensate him for the damage done to his business. "But," the paper stated, "this is the Clinton Administration, and the right thing to do is the last thing it would think of doing".

9. The article is yet another example of the series of articles published by respectable international newspapers, which have highlighted the United States' grave mistake in targeting the pharmaceutical plant.

10. I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Elfatih ERWA
Permanent Representative

Annex

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The ugly truth about attack in Sudan

By John Ellis, Globe Columnist, 05/13/99

On the night of Aug. 20, 1998, Saleh Idris went to bed as a member in good standing of the international business community. He had friends on every continent and held ownership stakes in business enterprises in the Middle East, Europe, and Africa. One of those enterprises was the al-Shifa pharmaceutical packaging plant in the Sudan.

On the morning of Aug. 21, al-Shifa was demolished by American cruise missiles. Later that day, President Clinton justified the attack by saying that al-Shifa was, in fact, a chemical weapons factory linked to Osama bin Laden, the Saudi exile who allegedly masterminded the bombing of Americas embassies in Kenya and Tanzania earlier that month.

And so it was that on the night of Aug. 21, Saleh Idris, member in good standing of the international business community, went to bed branded as an international terrorist. The campaign to defame his good name continues to this day, orchestrated from the offices of President Clinton's National Security Council. It is a despicable campaign, made more so by the fact that everyone involved in it knows that the charges against Idris are false.

Saleh Idris was born in the Sudan and educated in Saudi Arabia. He went into the banking business in Riyadh and prospered. Along the way, he made friends in high places in many countries, including the United States.

In March of 1998, Idris bought al-Shifa. In an interview with Chris Isham of ABC News, Idris said he did so in part because of his desire to give something back to the country of his birth. At the time it was destroyed, al-Shifa supplied more than half of all the medicines consumed in the Sudan, a desperately poor country in desperate need of medicine.

Incredibly enough, the Clinton administration knew none of

these facts when it ordered up the cruise missile attack. It did not even know that Idris was the owner of al-Shifa. Unencumbered by facts, members of the president's national security team explained the attack as follows:

Al-Shifa was an adjunct to the Sudanese military-industrial complex. It was closed to the public, fenced off and heavily guarded by Sudanese military personnel. In addition, a soil sample taken from the plant's premises proved that anthrax was being produced there.

The international press corps quickly made hash of all but the last of these assertions. Al-Shifa was not part of the Sudanese military-industrial complex. It was open to the public. There was no fence, and no guards patrolled its grounds (other than the night watchman who was killed in the attack).

Caught, the administration reconfigured its story. The new, improved version argued that Idris had a web of double-secret business connections to bin Laden that could not be discussed publicly, lest sources and methods be disclosed. These connections combined with the findings from the soil sample merited his designation as a terrorist. Idris's financial assets in the United States were frozen as a result.

Being a man of considerable means, Idris hired the law firm of Akin Gump (where his good friend and former Democratic National Committee Chairman Robert Strauss was a partner) to refute the US government's charges.

Akin Gump, in turn, hired the private investigative firm of Kroll and Associates to do a complete background check on Idris. Akin Gump also hired Tom Tullius, chairman of the chemistry department at Boston University, to do a scientific inquiry into whether or not Al-Shifa might have been manufacturing anthrax.

The Kroll investigation exonerated Idris of any ties, real or imagined, to bin Laden. The scientific inquiry concluded that al-Shifa was not a chemical weapons manufacturing facility and that the US government's soil sample was almost certainly a false positive. The net result of these investigations proved to all but senior Clinton administration officials that bad intelligence and bad science had led to a terribly mistaken bombing mission.

On May 3, 1999, the US Department of the Treasury tacitly admitted as much by unfreezing Idris's financial assets. Treasury did so under orders from the Department of Justice, which did so on instructions from the White House.

But the White House, true to form, continued its attack on Idris's good name. At the same time it was (de facto) lifting Idris's designation as a terrorist, National Security Council staffers told reporters that Idris was in fact a terrorist who maintained reprehensible associations.

Having successfully sued the US government to unfreeze Idris's financial assets, Akin Gump is now planning to sue the US government for compensatory damages (in the amount of $30 million). As surely as the government settled the first case, it will settle the second.

It would be better if the government simply confessed its error, apologized to Idris for its disgraceful conduct, and immediately compensated him for the damage done to his business. But this is the Clinton administration, and the right thing to do is the last thing it would think of doing.

John Ellis is a Globe columnist.

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